

## The Book of Many Tombs, Part I.

Written by: Gabor Lux (melanthenotsogreat@hotmail.com) – please give me feedback!

This treatise, intended for a party of able-bodied adventurers, is the first in a series describing the many burial vault, crypts and underworld graves hidden from the eye of the common man. While these long-lost ruins are unknown to most, they are recorded in a huge tome, The Book of Many Tombs. Penned by the adepts of a secret monastic order dedicated to the Lord of Undeath, the book was stolen by a notorious thief, who was later found dead in a gutter, strangled with a silk cord of unknown manufacture. The current location of the folio is a mystery, although it is reputed to be kept in the private library of the Overlord, guarded by fanatical slaves and otherworldly minions.

No matter the whereabouts, certain excerpts have surfaced in the latter years. These often fetch outrageous sums, as every thrill-seeker and never-do-well is sure they will be the ones to find the treasures of dead tyrants and priest-kings. What follows is one of these excerpts, originally copied in haste from the original (as evident from the scrawled script). Whereas the original only outlines the location and general layout of this tomb, we present here the whole, described and mapped as it is proper and wholesome. It must also be noted that the Book of Many Tombs is a somewhat misleading title: while most (not all) of the dungeons described were burial places originally, many have been reopened and populated by wild beasts, raiders, cultists or supernatural fiends. Several of the descriptions are therefore obsolete and these places must be approached with caution, as these new inhabitants are often much worse than the original spectres and undead – after all, they had the wherewithal to defeat or contain these ancient grave guardians and establish their own lairs instead.

### Tomb of the Barbarian King

*„Know then, that this Tomb, as the first in this Volume, is not far in distance from the great city of Rhamsandron, commonly spoken of as City of the Invincible Overlord. Know also that while the distance is small, it is not without peril. Certainly, it is a huge undertaking, one taxing the very soul of the traveler. One must leave through the Northern Gates, to embark on this expedition, and cross the Conqueror's River to the East. Then, it is wise to keep watch for monsters, as the Dearthwood is a most perilous environment for the untrained. To find the tomb of Doraat-Mar, ancient warlord of the ..... tribe, walk to the Northeast, until you come across a small river and a Citadel nearby. This castle is fairly new in construction, and inhabited by a Fighter and no less than four score and a dozen men, all armed and ready to fight. From here, the stream must be followed upriver to a high, towering cliff, where, beneath a waterfall, is a small grotto, fit for rest and as a shelter. The tomb of the king is rather hard to locate, as it is well hidden nearby. One must find the remains of stone walls and a circular mound of earth around, the remains of a former barbarian village. From here, look up, towards the rocks, and you shall see a small and treacherous ravine, seemingly impossible to climb. This is where you will find the Entrance, near an ancient inscription. Once this Entrance is located, the tomb can be entered and, beyond fake walls and paintings of death from above, the main chamber of burial found.”*

This dungeon originally served as a place of worship and reverence by the barbarians, whose faith was part druidic and part deific. Later, in the age of Doraat-Mar, a chieftain of note, it was expanded with a new underground hall. Doraat-Mar thought of himself as a son of the gods, and decreed that he will be venerated after his death for all eternity. Indeed, this is where he was buried, but the tribe suffered defeat after defeat at the hands of their enemies. It was thought that Doraat-Mar was too arrogant and this string of ill luck was a punishment for his hubris. The tomb chambers were walled up, and the entrance sealed, to keep the dead king in along with the misfortune. Despite this, the barbarians took the precautions to place a few traps and surprises, maybe to placate their former leader, or maybe not. A year later, the village finally fell and all survivors were either slain or enslaved. With them went the knowledge of this crypt and its secrets...

As evident from the directions, the tomb is on Campaign Map One, just northeast of the City State. Even getting to the dungeon is an undertaking in itself – Dearthwood is crawling with Orcs of the Purple Claw Tribe, and they will set ambushes and attack encamped parties unless they take precautions to hide their presence (i.e. put out campfires, etc). The small keep is in hex 3021, currently occupied by a 7<sup>th</sup> level Fighter (the descendant of the man who originally built it) and his 70 men. The ruined barbarian village and the high cliffs are in 2920. Neither the village, nor the grotto under the waterfall are interesting, although the surrounding area is inhabited by treants, a dryad and a pack of giant lynxes. There is no treasure, only bronze tools, clay pots and worthless trinkets buried under the earth.

The ravine leading up to the entrance is hard to climb due to treacherous footing and loose rocks (Climb DC 14 or fall d4\*10' and roll again). Fortunately, the ground near the entrance is even and safe, even for rest. The entry is an arched doorway, partially collapsed under the weight of rocks. It can be cleared in six hours (or three, if appropriate tools are used), revealing a tight crawlway inside, sloping down. The crawlway is 40 feet long before it exits into a normal, 10' wide corridor hewn from the rocks.

In general, all surfaces in the tomb are painted with murals (these are in good condition, albeit somewhat faded and wet) in black and red. The footing is good and the air is safe to breathe.

**1. Entry:** This entrance corridor is decorated with paintings of worshipping men and women, processing down the hall bearing gifts and led by a man wearing animal hides and a bear mask. On the other side, other men, this time armed and with snarling, evil faces, are going down the same hall, but they are stopped by animal-men (hybrid monstrosities), who hurl them into a fiery inferno.

The corridor is trapped: there is a double pit in the middle. These are later additions to the place, long after it was used as a temple. The first pit is badly concealed (Search DC 10 to locate, Reflex DC 20 to avoid) and only 30' deep and 8' across. The bad concealment is intentional, for it is intended to draw attention away from the second, right after the first. This pit is carefully hidden (Search DC 24 to locate, Reflex DC 24 to avoid), 60' deep and lined with spikes (d4+1 spikes, +10 to hit and d4+6 damage each plus infection, DC 14 or contract gangrene). The pits close on their own after eight rounds. So far, they have been empty.

**2. Main sacrifice area:** this was the first chamber of the temple, for the common worshippers and their small sacrifices. The murals depict barbarians laying their offerings before huge, fearsome-looking animals (there is a wolf, a bear, an eagle and a wormlike creature), and in turn receiving blessings. The room was converted into a „false crypt” as the place was closed. There is a crude stone altar, flanked by two idols. Each of these is a monstrous bear, painted with black and red to make them even more fearsome. The altar now holds the remains of a warrior on it (he was offered as a final sacrifice to reconcile Doraat-Mar with his abandonment). He wears fine, if decayed clothes, copper half-plate (treat as scale due to age and materials), a battleaxe (also copper), golden jewels worth 300 gp and a +1 *small metal shield*.

Although there is nothing else of worth here, this is not all there is to the crypt: there is a secret passage to the northwest. There is no secret door, though: the entrance was walled in, covered with stucco and painted over. The paint work is so masterfully done that even noticing it is a feat in itself (Search DC 22 to detect the different style, or DC 26 to find out by listening to echoes). Removing the stones and creating a man-sized entry takes a full hour.

**3. Circular hallway:** the hallway is vividly painted from the floor to the ceiling. The murals are a connected series, going clockwise from the entry point: they depict a soul's journey: first as a grub crawling up from the earth (southern quarter), then as a bird of prey (western quarter), a wolf (north), a bear (east) and, finally, as a grub again. While all depictions betray incredible talent, they are also unpleasant to behold: each is slightly distorted (vaguely humanlike, but with accented, twisted features) and radiates faint evil. Each of the four forms engages in evil acts: the worm feasts on terribly mutilated human corpses, the eagle claws out the eyes of bound slaves, the wolf tears apart helpless infants, and the bear sits content on a small hill of dead, still bleeding corpses.

The inner ring has a number of small alcoves (above floor level, 1' wide and 2' high). These contain sacrifices appropriate to the creatures on the opposing side – clay urns of human ashes and dirt for the worm, crushed rodents for the bird, lamb skulls for the wolf and human bones for the bear.

All exits to chambers are hidden as in **2.**, but these entrances are easier to open, only needing ten minutes to remove the rocks blocking the way in.

**4. Tomb of animals:** this room was one of the three higher worship areas. It has an arched ceiling and painted walls. These paintings are mostly of animals, with man-animal monsters, who torture and eat bound human shapes (these sacrifices are very lifelike and realistic, but they lack faces). There are heaps and heaps of carefully preserved animal remains along the walls, wrapped in dyed cloth and preserved with incense and herbs. There is a weird, unpleasant smell, the combination of musty spices used in mummification and a freshly exhumed grave. It takes a Spot check (DC 13) to notice that lanterns and torches burn with an eerie, greenish light here.

At the end of the room, there is a sealed well (painted with the eye of a cat), covered in the same stucco as the doorways. If the stucco is scraped off and the lid of the well removed, the noxious gases inside the well ignite (if there is any sort of open flame) and explode in a ball of fire (Reflex DC 16 for half, 30', 6d6). The well is 30' deep, with a 20' diameter lower room below. This is full of even more

corpses, which were just heaped in – animals and humans alike. If someone takes great pains to search these remains (DC 28 or six hours of digging), he will find 210 gp worth of jewelry or a *ring of protection* +1 (50/50% chance for each), but have to roll a Fortitude save (DC 15) or contract lycanthropy (wolf). The same is true if the mummified corpses are handled extensively.

**5. Tomb of plants:** much like **4.**, this room has decorations on the wall: a dark and twisted forest, and humans, strangled by tree-monsters. The air is heavy and fetid, and smells of earth and mold. Along the wall sit or lie a number of human mummies, in poses that betray intense agony and pain. Roots and long vines grow from their insides, tearing the wrappings apart. The southern end of the room has a small depression, filled with ceramic jugs, sealed with resin and tar. There is 15 such jugs, and each is completely intact.

If the jugs or the bodies are disturbed, four mummies (or rather, the assassin vines under the wrappings, marked with x's) animate and attack, preferring to strangle intruders with their appendages.

**Fiendish Assassin Vine Zombies (4)**, HD 4, CR 3, Medium-sized \*Plant\*/Outsider

Hp 22, 21, 28, 33

Init +0, Spd 20, AC 18 (+8 Nat)

+7 Vine d6+7+Grab, 20' reach

Fort +7/Rfx +1/Will +2 Str 20/Dex 10/Con 16/Int -/Wis 13/Cha 9

Immune to Electricity, Cold and Fire Resistance 20, Blindsight, Improved Grab, Constrict (d6+7),

Damage Reduction 5/+1, Spell Resistance 8

The ceramic jugs contain the following fluids:

-Five contain sweet mead. This brew is ancient and would fetch 20-100 gp per jug if a buyer could be found.

-Three contain a thick, green syrup. This syrup cures 3d8+6 Hp per dose if applied externally, or d8 if swallowed.

-Five contain a red liquid with a strong, acrid taste. This liquid raises Strength by 4 and lowers Wisdom by 2 for six hours. It is also a powerful sexual stimulant.

-Two are smaller than the other containers and they are wrapped in treebark in addition to being sealed. The orange liquid inside is extremely deadly: it was fermented from the crushed berries of assassin vines and treated magically. If it is swallowed, the drinker will at first feel nothing, but three hours later he will experience extreme stomach pains and convulsions. Every third hour thereafter, he loses 25% of his current hit points as a new assassin vine grows within. These injuries can't be cured, but the process can be halted with a Cure Disease spell (this stops further growth for a full day) and cured by a Heal, or by ingesting strong poison. If the victim dies, a new assassin vine will emerge in one day.

**6. Tomb of servants:** it is immediately apparent that this place had considerably less respect than the other rooms. Even the paintings seem to have been hastily done and they are of a uniformly poor quality. They depict servants and villagers, dressed in crude clothes, as they chop wood, mill seeds with hand mills, brew beer and so on. There are a lot of human bones here, strewn about and broken (some of them disturbingly clean and white). They are of all sizes, from infant to adult. There are also scratch marks on the wall, particularly near the entrance.

If intruders stay for a while, they can hear faint noises – sobbing, pleas for help and cries of pain. If the bones are carried out of here and given a proper burial, each good character should be awarded a 200 Xp individual award. If, on the other hand, the common jewels and trinkets are taken, everyone participating in the act is cursed (no save), gaining a -4 penalty to all rolls and checks until they receive a Remove Curse spell by a 12<sup>th</sup> level caster. The jewels are worth 45 gp in total.

**7. Collapse:** opening the doorway to this area, it seems that it was for naught: the ceiling of the passage collapsed and blocked the stairs. This, however, is a ruse: the rocks are piled against a normal wall likethefirst, and they can be cleared in three hours.

The passage leading down is as decorative as the others, but the paintings look slightly more recent. They depict those servants who built the tomb – as they dug the corridors, painted the walls and finally – just as the passage terminates – as they were drowned in water by warriors.

**8. Burial chamber:** this room is the last one in the complex. The northern part has a lower (10') ceiling than the rest (25'). As always, each wall is full of paintings. They are of conquests and war (burned down villages, captives, the bloody sacrifices of animalistic priests), feasts and orgies. The fourteen

columns are the strangest: they are carefully rendered three-dimensional portraits of warriors, each with different features and garb (mostly leather jerkins and greenish armour).

There are many miscellaneous items here, left for the afterlife: clay jars with wheat, knives, household tools (looms, etc). The southern part of the room is where Doraat-Mar's horse and wives were buried: unearthing these remains takes six hours of digging. The horse, equipped with saddle and reins, has *horseshoes of Zephyr*, while the three female skeletons have 620 gp worth of jewelry and a tattered cloak that used to be magical. If these two locations are disturbed, however, the party will later be attacked by a Large Butcher Spirit (CC1) and three Shadows, when they least expect it.

Finally, this chamber also contains the vault of the barbarian king: it is sealed by a pair of stone doors (stuck, DC 18 to open). Beyond is a short flight of stairs, leading up to a second (wooden) door. This door is covered in paintings, although badly deteriorated – a painting of Doraat-Mar, a muscular, bearded man in his late 40s. He wears an iron crown, an iron scepter and wields a sword. If this wooden door is opened, the king's corpse comes to life and attacks. Also, the columns in the chamber tumble down and a group of 14 skeletons emerge to aid their master...

#### **Doraat-Mar**, Undead Fighter 8, CR 8

Hp 67

Init +2, Spd 20, AC 22 (+6 Natural, +7 *Chainmail*, +2 Dex)

+13/+8 *Greatsword* 2d6+8 (17-20/\*2)

+10/+5 *Shortspear* ranged d8+4 (\*3, 20')

Fort +8/Rfx +4/Will +7 Str 18/Dex 14/Con -/Int 11/Wis 16/Cha 14

Power Attack, Sunder, Cleave, Weapon Focus (*Greatsword*, *Mace*), Leadership, Improved Crit (*Greatsword*), Weapons Spec (*Greatsword*)

*Crown of Command*. Command 2/day as a free action, DC=11+Cha bonus (13), to 65'

+2 *Greatsword*, +2 *Chainmail*, +2 *Bracers of Health* [useless to him]

#### **Skeletons**, Undead War 1, CR 1

Hp 2, 12, 2, 9, 6, 9, 4, 5, 6, 11, 4, 11, 11, 1

Init +6, Spd 20, AC 19 (+5 *Chainmail*, +2 *Shield*, +2 Dex)

+3 *Battleaxe* d8+2 (\*3)

Fort +0/Rfx +2/Will +2 Str 15/Dex 14/Con -/Int 10/Wis 10/Cha 11

Improved Init, Weapon Focus (*Battleaxe*)

If the undead warlord and his aides are defeated, his treasure is free for the taking:

-An earthen pot filled with golden jewels (1200 gp total)

-2 *potions of giant strength*

-2 *potions of heroism*

On the other hand, if he survives, his power will soon grow to level 14 and he will start to gather an undead horde to take over the world, or failing that, causing as much suffering in the world of the living as possible. This, however, is outside the scope of this mini-module.

**THE END**

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